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C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 002314

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: DHAKA QUIET AFTER KILLING OF OPPOSITION OFFICIAL

Classified By: P/E Counselor D.C. McCullough, reason para 1. 4 d.

1. (C) Summary. Local media and some Awami League (AL) leaders speculate that the May 17 killing in Dhaka of a minor party leader was the result of internal rivalries and not, as the AL publicly alleges, "government backed killers." End Summary.

2. (SBU) On May 17, three unidentified assailants in the Tejgaon district of Dhaka unleashed a barrage of gunfire that killed Advocate Khorshed Alam Bachchu, Legal Secretary of the Awami League's Dhaka city unit, as he went to work at the Supreme Court. The killing triggered limited but violent rioting in Tejgaon, which is about a half mile from the Chancery. AL SYG Abdul Jalil condemned the killing as the work of "government-backed killers" and announced as a protest a dawn-to-dusk general strike for May 18 in Dhaka.

3. (SBU) Local media, citing AL sources, speculated that internal AL rivalries over appointments to a local committee might be behind the attack. Bachchu's widow, in a tearful TV interview, alluded to committee "problems," apparently as a possible factor in her husband's death. Embassy press guidance, reported by many newspapers, expressed condolences to the bereaved, condemnation of acts of violence, and hopes for bringing Bachchu's killers to justice promptly and lawfully.

4. (C) AL Joint Secretary General Mukul Bose, a Sheikh Hasina loyalist, confirmed to us that internal rivalries could be involved, but said it is premature to draw firm conclusions about the perpetrators or their motives.

5. (SBU) The May 18 general strike has been relatively relaxed, with no reports of violence and traffic moving at close to normal levels in many areas.

6. (C) Comment: The AL's ability to derive mileage from the killing of Bachchu, a minor official largely unknown outside his neighborhood and AL circles, appears to be limited. His modest profile and speculation that he was the victim of internal party rivalries probably account for the exceptionally poor public response to today's strike. Competition for local party prominence can be fierce for the sake of prestige and of influence in the awarding/selling of party nominations for political posts.

THOMAS